

Assessing the History and Current Status of Community Conservation at The Nature Conservancy

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1717 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Suite 302, Washington, DC 20036 USA
Tel.: 202-332-2853 FAX: 202-332-8257 Internet: WIDinfo@widtech.org

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Assessing the History and Current Status of Community Conservation at the Nature Conservancy

*A Review of Literature for the Strategic Planning
Process of the Community Conservation Program,
International Conservation Science,
The Nature Conservancy*

by

Mary Hill Rojas, Environment Specialist
G/WID/WIDTECH/USAID in Collaboration with LAC/USAID and
The Nature Conservancy

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INTRODUCTION

The Nature Conservancy (TNC), a private international organization recognized as preeminent in the field of conservation, is committed to “community conservation,” working closely with communities in a variety of ways to assure the conservation of biodiversity . There is a recognition within the organization as Greg Low, Vice President of the Conservancy, has written, that “The job of biodiversity conservation has become an economic and social task” (Low, “Ecosystem...,” p. 1)

The Community Conservation Program (CCP), housed in the International Program of the Nature Conservancy, was formed in 1995 as a part of the Parks in Peril (PIP) funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The 1998 evaluation of the Parks in Peril recommended that the Community Conservation Program develop a strategic plan through a participatory process with USAID, Parks in Peril, and TNC staff and partners. The objectives of the strategic plan would be to provide a clear rationale for community conservation within the International Program of the Conservancy with guidance for the CCP for developing policies and selecting and implementing activities.

This report provides the first step of the strategic planning process as it presents the background and current status of community conservation within the Conservancy through a literature review and an assessment of community conservation efforts under the U.S. Partnership and the International Program. Recommendations are provided at the end for the next steps of the strategic planning process.¹

LITERATURE REVIEW: THE FUNDAMENTALS

There are several fundamental documents that frame the current work of The Nature Conservancy, both the U.S. Partnership and the International Program. They are **“Conservation by Design,” *Beyond the Ark*, “A Geography of Hope,”** and the **site conservation planning documents**. All these documents include a perspective on community conservation. Also included in this review of “The Fundamentals” is the vision on community conservation of John Sawhill, The Conservancy President.

“Conservation by Design”

The guiding principles of the Nature Conservancy are found in its mission, values, and strategies. Its mission is to “preserve plants, animals, and natural communities by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.” Its conservation goal is “the long-term survival of all viable native species and community types through the design and conservation of portfolios of sites within ecoregions.” (Conservation by Design, 1997, p. 2)

¹ Two other documents are available as a result of the review: a) a comprehensive review of documents; b) a brief on the Nature Conservancy and gender.

Although the mission and the goal reflect the biological and ecological orientation of the Conservancy, “community conservation,” the human dimension of ecosystem management, plays a prominent role in the organization. John Sawhill, President of the Nature Conservancy has written that “If ecoregional planning tells us where to work – and what to work on—it does not tell us how to work. The answer can be found in community conservation.” (Sawhill, *Nature Conservancy*, p. 6) One institutional value is a “Commitment to People” to actively involve “women and men from a broad spectrum of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, ages, and abilities, lifestyles, and beliefs...” in conservation. (Institutional Value Statement) Two other values, outlined in “Conservation by Design,” emphasize the effectiveness of collaborative efforts and “the imperative of developing ways to enable humans to live productively and sustainably while conserving biological diversity.” (Conservation by Design, p. 1)

The fundamental strategic themes of the Conservancy, also outlined in Conservation by Design, include several references to the human dimension of conservation including a reliance on information from both “the social sciences as well as the natural sciences.” (Conservation by Design, p. 5) The strategic theme to build a “Conservation Ethic” recognizes that “People must understand that human well-being depends upon the health of ecological systems and that economic growth must be compatible with maintaining the health of these systems. Respecting and learning from the needs, values, and traditions of the communities in which we work, The Nature Conservancy and its partners, especially at the local level, will help ensure that such an ethic infuses these communities.” (Conservation by Design, p. 5).

The strategic theme that most directly provides guidance for community conservation, “Compatible Human Uses of Lands and Waters,” uses an economic framework: “Real world examples that demonstrate how market-driven forces can lead to biodiversity conservation need to be promoted wherever they exist and encouraged where they are currently lacking.” (Conservation by Design, p. E-5) It advocates harnessing “the power of the market to maintain or restore functioning landscapes and conserve biodiversity while allowing people to prosper.” (Conservation by Design, p. 5)

“Implementing Conservation by Design,” a companion piece to “Conservation by Design,” lays out three strategies “to provide the organization with strategic direction and focus.” (Implementing Conservation by Design, p. 2) The first strategy, site-based conservation, defines community conservation as “the presence of a Conservancy practitioner working in partnership with key stakeholders at a site to develop lasting solutions that abate key threats. (The success of community-based conservation rests on a holistic approach bringing together ecological, economic and community interests.)” (Implementing Conservation by Design, p. 7) A central strategy is to apply community conservation at anchor sites by first, building “central mentoring and logistical support for community-based conservation” and second, revising “the site conservation planning methodology to more explicitly include components of community-based conservation strategies...” (Implementing Conservation by Design, p. 6)

The importance of “love of place” and the support of communities, are concepts articulated by President John Sawhill in the 1998 article “The Good Neighbor Policy: Working People to People, We Make Conservation Happen.” Sawhill asserts that “our long term success depends on unleashing the enormous latent power of a community’s love of place.” (Sawhill, 1998, p. 6) He states that local communities are the key to conservation and “without their support we can never achieve our goals.” He ends by emphasizing that “our most significant accomplishment will be to have conservation leaders committed to place and community.” (Sawhill, p. 11)

Beyond the Ark

Beyond the Ark, written in 1998 by William Weeks, Executive Vice President of the Nature Conservancy, provides core Conservancy concepts, including the importance of an ecosystem approach, of documenting and disseminating lessons learned and of the support of the community. Weeks suggests that “Conservation as we near the third millennium will have to be supported by a tripod. Perhaps the main load bearing leg is ecology. But the stability will be achieved only with the addition of two other legs, community and economy.” (Weeks, p. 39) He emphasizes that within the ecosystem approach, “the support of the human community for conservation, always a desirable goal, is likely to become essential.” (Weeks, p. 39) Although Weeks emphasizes economic development (Weeks, pp. 39-40) he also writes that “real, lasting conservation nearly always requires community understanding of, pride in, and responsibility for the natural systems that surround and, after all, support the community’s social and economic systems.” (Weeks, p. 39)

Weeks grounds his approach to planning in five “S’s”: systems, stresses, sources, strategies and success. “Briefly the planning objective is to understand the ecological *stresses* that burden it [the *system*], trace the stresses to their socioeconomic *sources*, develop good *strategies* to address the sources and alleviate the stresses and, finally determine how to define *success* and measure progress.” (Weeks, p. 45) He mentions that some have suggested that the fourth “s” should be *social situation* instead of strategies. “It surely is critical to understand the attitudes, aspirations, and economic circumstances of the human communities affected by the conservation system we are working on. Indeed, only by obtaining this kind of understanding can we synthesize strategies that will be effective.” (Weeks, p. 47)

Weeks also looks at ways of measuring progress and comments that strategies for conservation of large and complex systems need to consider “the measure of society and economy right along with measurements of ecology.” (Weeks, p. 115)

“Designing a Geography of Hope: Guidelines for Ecoregion-based Conservation in The Nature Conservancy”

“A Geography of Hope” is meant to provide guidance for the implementation of the Conservancy’s ecoregional approach to conservation. (Designing a Geography..., p. 2) It complements the framework laid out in “Conservation by Design.” The planning section particularly addresses community conservation. Two criteria are used in setting priorities for

action among ecoregions, biological distinctiveness and conservation status. Once the priority regions are chosen a *value for conservation capacity* is assigned. Conservation capacity is the entry point for community conservation and includes an analysis of elements within the region such as conservation policies; local or regional conservation groups; sociopolitical attitudes towards conservation and the presence of a grassroots land ethic sufficient for sustainable conservation. (Designing a Geography..., p. 22)

In both the planning and practice sections understanding who the stakeholders are and their role is important in “identifying stakeholder motivations and interests common to, or conflicting with, those of the Conservancy.” (Designing a Geography..., p. 53) Characteristics of human institutions, local communities and land use are given equal weight with ecological attributes for site conservation planning (Geography of Hope, p. 57) Ultimately “The Geography of Hope” suggests two questions from the community conservation perspective to be addressed: “What current or potential human-related activities interfere with the maintenance of the functional ecological system?” “Which individuals, groups and institutions are likely to affect or be affected by attempts to achieve the site-based conservation goals?” (Designing a Geography..., p. 58)

Site Conservation Planning and Measures of Success

The Nature Conservancy considers its work at the site level to be one of its fundamental strengths. Therefore, site conservation planning is essential to the way the Nature Conservancy operates. The site conservation planning manual is being revised to adopt a methodology that can be used by both the U.S. Partnership and the International Program. Currently, however, there are three relevant documents that deal with site conservation planning, the site conservation training document; the Spanish translation document on site conservation planning, “Planificación para la Conservación de Sitios” and the practitioner’s handbook, “Site Conservation Planning and Measures of Conservation Success.”

Site Conservation Training: The training document for site conservation planning states that “The assessment of the human and socioeconomic context is an essential component of the site conservation planning process. Just as you cannot understand a natural community without gathering ecological data, you cannot understand the human community without looking at how its social and economic makeup shapes its relationship with TNC. And it has recently become even more important now that the Conservancy is working in larger scale sites where interacting with local communities and community-based conservation is being emphasized.” (Site Conservation Planning Workshop, Section 5)

Planificación para la Conservación de Sitios: The Site Conservation Planning Handbook was revised in 1999 and translated into Spanish in June, 1999. In the Spanish document community conservation is fully integrated in the four stages of the planning process: a) information gathering; b) analysis; c) strategies; d) implementation.

- # **Information gathering:** The handbook stresses that information must be gathered on both the ecological context and the human context. It states that a human context analysis contributes to: a) a better understanding of the impact of the political, economic and

social systems that influence site conservation; b) the promotion of community participation in site planning; c) participatory monitoring and evaluation. (Planificacion, p. 31)

- # **Analysis:** The analysis section of the planning handbook stresses the importance of understanding stakeholders and their communities: “The time given to studying and understanding communities has been fundamental for the success of the various conservation projects, whereas projects that have not taken into account the human context have suffered setbacks.” (Planificacion, p. 58)
- # **Strategies:** There are a variety of strategies listed in the handbook which include for example, protection of soils and water, ecological restoration and fund raising. (Planificacion, p. 71) One of the strategies singled out for review is community-based programs and the cooperation and involvement of stakeholders. (Planificacion, p. 73)
- # **Implementation:** Community participation is one of the four substantive areas in the handbook around which activities should be designed for implementation. The implementation stage also includes monitoring and evaluation. Community conservation is particularly relevant to the development of site capacity, the third indicator for measuring success.

Site Conservation Planning and Measures of Success: A Practitioner’s Handbook: This document is based on the five “S’s” of the Nature Conservancy, systems, stresses, sources, strategies and success with little mention of community conservation. However, the manual mentions that “Understanding the natural environment as well as the human context (situation) at a site underlies the application of the Five-S framework. Thus two types of information are fundamental to the planning process, ecological information and human context information.” (Site Conservation Planning, p. 11) The document also suggests that conservation strategies “may require community-based programs designed to secure short-term and long-term community support ” as found in the Conservancy publication, “Landscape-Scale, Community-Based Conservation: A Practitioners Handbook.” (Site Conservation Planning, p. 33)

Three general indicators are mentioned for measuring conservation success. They are “biodiversity health,” “threat status and abatement” and “conservation capacity.” It is particularly with conservation capacity that the measures of success for community conservation are to be found. (Site Conservation Planning, p. 44) In general, this document does not place the emphasis on community conservation that other fundamental Conservancy documents do nor does it correspond to the document in Spanish on site-conservation planning.

THE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM

Experiences from the U.S. Partnership

For much of its history, the Nature Conservancy has worked almost exclusively within the United States, managing parks and reserves from a protectionist perspective. In the early 1990s, there was a recognition that habitat conservation was not enough. As Greg Low wrote in 1997, “The threats extend far beyond habitat destruction; they include less direct, but equally serious threats such as agricultural practices which cause sedimentation and nutrient enrichment in adjoining aquatic systems. In fact, the vast majority of bioreserves cannot be protected solely by direct habitat conservation. To save these ecosystems, the Conservancy must address a variety of threats which cannot be solved through traditional land protection.” (Low, “Ecosystem...,” p. 1) One solution is to work with communities.

By 1997, a Conservancy document, “Pathways: Building a Local Initiative for Compatible Economic Development,” noted that conservation depends on a “vibrant community, a vigorous economy and a healthy environment” (Low et al., p. 2) “The health of each element - community, economy, environment - is tied to the vitality of each of the others. In order to achieve healthy communities, the strategy is to move “ ...away from single-focus economic development or industrial recruitment towards an integrated approach that addresses the local community, economy, and environment and offers a sound plan for compatible economic development.” (Low et al., p. 5)

Today one of the three goals of the Conservancy’s U.S. Partnership that embodies the approach to community conservation is “to build site conservation capacity.” Within this goal, successful site capacity is seen as including both talented conservation staff and community-based conservation. Community-based conservation is:

- # Working with key stakeholders in local communities to abate critical threats;
- # Building long term local support for conservation; and
- # Building long term support for compatible development. (Conservation Goals, p. 5)

The U.S. Partnership emphasizes economic development or compatible development terms often used interchangeably. The “Center for Compatible Economic Development” is the locus of the community conservation efforts of the U.S. Partnership. In a Center publication, “compatible development” is seen as “the production of goods and services, the creation and maintenance of businesses, and the pursuit of land uses that conserve the environment, enhance the local economy and achieve community goals.” (Pathways, p. 1) This decidedly economic goal is reached from within the community itself, using a collaborative strategic approach.

Experiences from the International Program

Today The Nature Conservancy has international programs in Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific and Canada. Of particular importance to understanding the current status of community conservation is the Parks in Peril project and the programs for community conservation within the International Program

Parks in Peril

In 1990 the Nature Conservancy began to work outside of the United States in Latin America and the Caribbean with the Parks in Peril Program. The Parks in Peril (PIP) Program, the largest program supporting parks in the western hemisphere, aims to “secure the survival of some of the most endangered and biologically important areas in Latin America and the Caribbean.” (Mansour, p. ix)

The overall PIP approach is to work with local partners, environmental non-governmental organizations, who in turn work with local communities. Therefore, PIP has a fundamental interest in community conservation. “We recognize the need for local voices in building a constituency for protected areas. Working together we are changing national and international policies and creating incentives to sustain local conservation efforts and economies.” (Mansour, p. xii)

Many PIP sites receive funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which gives priority to the conservation of biodiversity through work with communities. One result USAID seeks is to develop a community constituency to support sustainable management of targeted parks and reserves through:

- # An increased awareness by communities of the importance of the protected areas;
- # Increased participation of local people in their management; and
- # Increased economic benefits for community members from their maintenance.

The Parks in Peril Consolidation Scorecard has been a major contribution to measuring the progress of protected areas. There are four areas used to assess a protected area: a) basic protected activities; b) long-term management; c) long-term financing; d) site constituency. Under each area are indicators for measuring success. The area most relevant to community conservation is Site Constituency that uses four indicators:

Broad-based management committee/technical advisory committee: This indicator assures that there is participation of local communities and other stakeholders in the reserve management process and that “representation and participation are viewed as two integral features of all effective management or advisory committees.” (Measuring Success, p. 18)

Community involvement in compatible resource use: The assumption underlying this indicator is that conservation depends on the communities living in and around the protected area to use “biological resources in a manner that is compatible with the biodiversity conservation goals of the protected area.” (Measuring Success, p. 19)

Policy agenda development at international/national/regional/local levels: “Protected areas can support the conservation of biological diversity insofar as local, regional, national, and international policies that promote biodiversity conservation allow these sites to function effectively and to thrive.” (Measuring Success, p. 20)

Environmental education programs: Environmental education is one strategy for attaining the support of local stakeholders and others. Such programs cover a broad range of activities. However, “a common denominator is often a systematic explanation to local residents of the importance of the protected area and of the rules and regulations relating to it.” (Measuring Success, p. 21)

Community conservation is emphasized again in a review of PIP sites conducted in 1995 by Katrina Brandon, Kent Redford and Steven Sanderson: *Parks in Peril: People, Politics and Protected Areas*. In their review they emphasize that “ensuring the long-term protection of sites means that the conservation community must be able to adequately analyze the impact of historical, social, and political trends across sites and use such analysis to develop long lasting, effective solutions.” (Brandon, p. 4) Brandon states that “an illusion exists among conservationists that what they are doing is conservation—when ... it is clear that they are really doing large scale social interventions in complicated settings.” (Brandon, p. 417)

Brandon writes that the social context from the perspective of a park, is usually the set of threats that faces a park—expanding agricultural frontiers, illegal hunting and logging, fuelwood collection. However, her main theme is that conservationists must change the expectation that parks are supposed to be the cornerstone of sustainable development activities and refocus their attention and actions on biodiversity conservation. She maintains that “meeting the challenges outside of protected areas is best left to professionals from other disciplines with expertise in rural development...” (Brandon, p. 418)

Brandon suggests areas where the principles of community conservation need to be brought to bear.

- # Establishing parks—the type of park chosen should depend on the social context. For example, a biosphere is more socially complex than are conventional parks; (Brandon, p. 421)
- # Determining local participation appropriate to the type of park, i.e., biosphere reserves require high levels of local involvement in zoning, monitoring, and management; (Brandon, p. 438)
- # Clarifying land and resource tenure to minimize uncertainty that leads to unsustainable use; (Brandon, p. 438) and

- # Being explicit with local populations over management decisions that may have implications for equity concerns. “Equity issues or a sense of “fairness” can be extremely important in how local people respond to parks perceived threats, and partners.” (Brandon, p. 431)

Gender and Parks in Peril

Gender, the culturally defined roles, rights and responsibilities of men and women, has been considered at various points in the history of the Conservancy’s international programs within the context of conservation, particularly through Parks in Peril. The emphasis of the Conservancy on inclusiveness and the involvement of communities in conservation provides a natural framework for the inclusion of gender. For example, the job description for the Local People Specialist in 1995 states that the specialist is to “assess the role of gender in all programs and develop ways of improving training, implementation and research in activities concerning gender and natural resource use.” (Local People Specialist, p. 1)

The 1998 external evaluation of PIP undertaken by USAID provided a rationale for the inclusion of gender. “Gender analysis is a useful conservation tool for understanding communities and the institutions that support them within the protected areas. Men and women often have different roles in the management of natural resources; understanding who has access to and control of natural resources and who benefits from those resources is essential to sustainable conservation. because of their intimate relationship to their communities and families.” (External Evaluation, p. 22) The evaluation, in particular, noted that there was a need to document the PIP experience with gender and “to develop a gender strategy that supports the work of the protected areas, defines the gender training and leadership needs at each site and is in line with the USAID policy on gender.” (External Evaluation, p. 22)

The current Community Conservation Program staff integrates gender into Conservancy work in a variety of ways including: a) using gender as a core variable for analysis in the Site Conservation Planning Manual; b) collaborating on training, development of case studies and conferences with the USAID supported project on Managing Ecosystems with a Gender Emphasis (MERGE); c) monitoring the use of gender in field-based projects; d) sponsoring training with a gender focus; e) collaborating with gender programs in other environment organizations and keep track of other initiatives; g) establishing the Community Conservation Coalition which has attention to gender as a central part of its mission; h) developing a message on population dynamics and the environment which includes the importance of gender.

The Structure of Community Conservation in the International Program

Institutional Development Department

The mission of this department is to promote shared learning with partner organizations to build and strengthen the individual skills and long-term institutional capacity needed to further biodiversity conservation in the region. The department, formerly called the Training Department, promotes in-region training capacity, disseminates knowledge and experience gained by the Conservancy and partners and initiates learning and dialogue in areas outside of the Conservancy's or partners' traditional knowledge and experience base.

Compatible Economic Development Department and Ecotourism

In 1997, a Conservancy conservation committee stressed the “great promise” of compatible economic development for the Conservancy mission and developed two criteria that they suggested be met if the Conservancy is to be involved in “Compatible development.” They are, first, that the proposed economic activity is primarily designed to mimic or restore essential ecological processes; and second, that the proposed activity will reduce threats to the conservation target and not otherwise degrade the relevant ecological processes. (Runnels, p. 2)

In 1999, the Compatible Economic Development Department was formed within the International Program. The mission of the Department is to strengthen the relationship of conservation, economic development and healthy communities. The Department builds on the economic emphasis in “Conservation by Design” and it addresses a question often asked, namely, “Why should the Conservancy be involved with economic development?” the Department answers that implementing economic activities protects biodiversity by “providing alternative sources of income to local peoples, adding economic value to the land...and generating revenues to further the conservation agenda and strengthen local institutions.”(Leon, p. 4)

In 1998 the Conservancy initiated the Ecotourism Program within the Institutional Development Department. The program was transferred to the Compatible Economic Development Department in 1999 with a mission to “provide technical assistance to partners and country programs in order to better harness the potential of ecotourism as a conservation tool that contributes to the long-term protection of biodiversity and the natural resources upon which it is based.” (Ecotourism Strategy, p. 4) The program has both the goal to develop tools to reduce threats posed by tourism and to develop tools to facilitate the development of ecotourism that will strengthen conservation. (Ecosystem Strategy, p. 5)

Conservation Science's Community Conservation Program

History of the Program. In 1995, the Local People's Program was established within the Conservation Science Department of the Latin America and Caribbean Division of the Nature Conservancy. The program was an outgrowth of the Conservancy's involvement with the Parks in Peril Program. The Local People's Program was to concentrate on the relationship between biodiversity conservation, protected area management, and local human populations by: a) implementing better field-based programs; b) training staff; and c) assessing Conservancy portfolios. There was specific attention paid to "traditional peoples" and the gender dimensions of natural resource use. (Local People Specialist, p. 1)

In support of the Local People's Program, funds were provided to establish a Local Peoples Balancing Theme in 1997. The goal was to gain an understanding of local communities at Parks in Peril sites and to understand how those communities interact with and have an impact on the protected areas. As the Program was to focus on the site level an initial step was to review the community conservation activities within the Parks in Peril Program in order to assess "the program's efforts to build local constituencies and integrate local communities into protected area management" (Dugleby and Libby, p. 1) The results of the assessment found that most Conservancy partners were working on developing trust and an awareness of conservation in the communities, not reducing locally-induced threats to the protected area. (Brandon, p. 74) The process, Dugleby and Libby contend, assumes that after gaining the trust of locals through investing time and resources to their needs, environmental organizations can enter a phase in which they move closer to issues more directly related to the management of the protected area, such as natural resource management and the reduction of threats. (Brandon, p. 74)

In keeping with the focus on the site level a major focus of the Local People's Program was the development of the Human Ecological Profile (HEP), a tool for gathering social data within communities living in or around protected areas. In 1998, The HEP was replaced by the "Human Context Analysis" under the Community Conservation Program in order to integrate socioeconomic data into the on-going analytical tools of the Conservancy, primarily site-based conservation planning. (Dugelby and Russell)

Community Conservation Program. In 1998, the Community Conservation Program (CCP) replaced the Local People's Program, although the mission was the same: "to concentrate on the relationship between biodiversity conservation, protected area management, and local human populations" (Community Conservation Program Manager, p. 1). While this relationship has traditionally been conceived in terms of "local peoples" (i.e., indigenous groups, smallholder agriculturalists, artisanal fishers), both the philosophy and the practice of what is now understood to be community conservation is, by necessity, quite broad. From an historical concentration at the site level, community conservation also has important roles to play at larger geographic and institutional scales. Issues of migration, population pressures and determinant socio-political structures are crucial elements for the goal of long-term biodiversity conservation. Understanding these issues and incorporating them into conservation planning and implementation requires a broad-based approach to

community conservation, one which expands the analytical and applied role of the CCP beyond the traditional concept of working primarily with local people.

The CCP thus seeks to include the human dimension within all of the five “S” stages as appropriate. This process requires a better understanding of the relationship between human populations and conservation and innovation in the application of the Conservancy’s site conservation planning methodology. To this end, the CCP concentrates on training partners on the complexity of the human-biodiversity relationship and in the use of analytical tools to improve the understanding of that relationship. Such tools include participatory field research methods, new uses of mapping technologies, demographic analyses and inclusive approaches to strategy design and implementation. The CCP also facilitates the exchange of ideas by bringing together conservationists from different groups who face similar challenges through south-south exchanges, shared learning and documentation of community conservation experiences.

Divisional community conservation programs extend the reach of the Community Conservation Program beyond the central Conservation Science Department. Two examples are the program in the Andean and Southern Cone (ASC) and the program in Mexico. The ASC is the only division within the International Program to have committed to a full-time staff position for community conservation. The mission of the ASC’s Community Conservation Program is “to enhance conservation success and reduce protected area threats by building capacity within the Division, in-country partners and community organizations to involve local communities in protected area management decisions that affect their lives, lands and economic livelihoods as well as the future of conservation sites.” (Strategic Plan, p. 3)

Working in conjunction with CCP staff, the Andean and Southern Cone developed a matrix for profiling community conservation activities. The criteria of the matrix, which shows the program focus, includes: a) completion and use of a threats analysis to guide on-site work; b) ability of the partner to carry out community conservation work as judged by their level of training; c) thoroughness and application of the Human Context Analysis; and d) the development and application of a monitoring program that includes community conservation elements. (Ulfelder, “Memo...” p. 2)

The Southern Mexico program has initiated projects and strategic planning processes to address community conservation issues, including the identification of staffing needs. The “Sustainable Communities Initiative” supports the establishment of sustainable community models which include developing criteria for assessing communities in terms of their impact on an areas’ conservation targets; designing a monitoring and evaluation system and promoting networks of community practitioners. The methodological framework is the same as that used for site conservation planning, objectives, information, analysis, strategies, actions and evaluation. Overall, the Initiative will “build strategies for community conservation programs that significantly contribute to the abatement of threats to natural resource conservation.” (“Sustainable...,” p. 6)

The Latin America and Caribbean Strategic Plan

Strategic planning for Conservancy programs in Latin America and the Caribbean was initiated in 1999, under the leadership of Alexander Watson, Conservancy Vice President of the International Program. This planning builds on the work of the Conservancy's International Program Project task force established in 1994. The vision of the strategy reflects the Conservancy mission: "To assist countries, through partnerships, to build the capability and commitment to conserve their biological diversity and the natural systems necessary to sustain life." (Recommendations, p. 6) The Conservancy will work with partners at three levels, site, system and alliance. Community conservation is highlighted at the site level, mentioned in the systems level and implied at the alliance level.

Sites—engaging local communities and leading site-based coalitions of diverse local actors to undertake broadly supported conservation strategies. (Recommendations, p. 10)

Systems—influencing official and non-official systems, institutions and actors seeking to translate site-based conservation lessons into effective tools to conserve large numbers of sites where there is no Conservancy investment. Such influence may leverage opportunities for community conservation, for example, "change the behavior of key institutions in important ways; experiment with diverse approaches involving government, civil society, private enterprise and other sectors and categories of collaborators." (Recommendations, p. 10)

Alliances—solving pressing problems and developing and testing new ideas and approaches. Alliances fall into two general categories: best practices networks; high payoff networks to develop and test new ideas and approaches. (Recommendations, p. 12)

Within the strategy crosscutting thematic and support programs, of which the Community Conservation Program is one, are to:

- # Evaluate the demands of country programs for technical support and devise strategies for responding to these demands;
- # Provide access to information and counsel;
- # Advance conservancy thinking and skills by developing new methods and techniques;
- # Offer training opportunities for TNC in new skill areas;
- # Promote a culture of constructive peer review;
- # Help to set and communicate standards;
- # Help to establish, communicate and monitor practical approaches;

- # Provide support to alliance level initiatives; and
- # Participate in interactive priority-setting exercises. (Recommendations, p. 14)

Overall, the International Program has worked with their partners to understand the concerns of the people, use that understanding to inform, involve and empower communities and realize the potential local people have to be conservation's strongest allies. (Community-based Conservation, p. 3) Specifically, the International Program is to work with local people to build support for protected areas and to conserve natural resources by:

- # Building awareness and trust;
- # Engaging local communities in managing protected areas; and
- # Promoting land use planning, natural resource management, and compatible development. (Community-based Conservation, p. 6)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The main conclusions of the literature review are as follows:

1. Substantive Themes

The core documents of The Nature Conservancy underscore the importance of community conservation especially in developing a conservation ethic that affirms the link between a healthy environment and human prosperity and compatible development that harnesses the marketplace. "Love of place" and community support also are regarded critical elements for conservation. Conservation goals and objectives are reached through collaborative efforts that actively involve a broad spectrum of people, both men and women, and rely on an interdisciplinary, holistic approach. Site capacity is often the entry point for community conservation as the capacity of a protected area to practice conservation depends on sociopolitical attitudes, strong local conservation groups and other community responses. Gathering socioeconomic data for site-based planning is given equal weight to the need for biological information. However, the documents for site-based planning are less clear about the role for community conservation in the other phases of the planning process.

2. Strategic Approach

There are a variety of different ideas and approaches to community conservation within the Conservancy, particularly within the International Program. For example, Katrina Brandon insists that parks should not be considered the cornerstone of sustainable development activities. She maintains this expectation needs to be changed so reserves can refocus on biodiversity conservation. (Brandon, p. 418) At the other extreme, is the approach often used by Conservancy partners which is to initiate projects that produce direct and immediate benefit to locals in order to win their trust and support, whether or not they address “threat abatement.” (Brandon, p. 74)

Also, the core Conservancy documents and the U.S. Partnership seem to emphasize the involvement of key community stakeholders and leaders; whereas the International Program seeks the active participation of the community as a whole in a wide variety of activities. The Conservancy emphasizes “economic development” activities. “Social” and “community” activities are terms often used in tandem with economic development. These terms need to be defined and clarified.

3. Mandate

The mandate for the Community Conservation Program is unclear. The CCP was created under Parks in Peril (PIP), therefore its historical focus has been Latin America and the Caribbean. As a PIP project it is to implement the PIP objectives for community conservation, namely, to foster:

- # An increased awareness by communities of the importance of the protected areas;
- # Increased participation of local people in their management; and
- # Increased economic benefits for community members from their maintenance.

However, there are other more general mandates for a community conservation program as outlined in Conservancy documents. For example, “Conservation by Design” recommends such a program focus on two action steps: first, to “build central mentoring and logistical support for community-based conservation” and second, to “revise the site conservation planning methodology to more explicitly include components of community-based conservation strategies...” (Implementing Conservation by Design, p. 6)

“Geography of Hope” would have a community conservation program deal with two questions: “What current or potential human-related activities interfere with the maintenance of the functional ecological system?” “Which individuals, groups and institutions are likely to affect or be affected by attempts to achieve the site-based conservation goals?” (Designing a Geography..., p. 58) Finally, the Latin America and Caribbean Strategy both outlines specific tasks for a crosscutting thematic program such as community conservation and integrates community conservation into the site, systems and alliance level.

4. Administrative Structure

Community conservation is present at different levels throughout the Conservancy. The U.S. Partnership has as one locus for community conservation the “Center for Compatible Economic Development” in Leesburg, Virginia. Within the International Program, there are three units that deal with community conservation, The Institutional Development Department, the Compatible Economic Development Department that includes the Ecotourism Program, and the Community Conservation Program within the Conservation Science Department. Finally, there are regional programs in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific for community conservation, some with full time staff.

Recommendations

As a result of this literature review the following recommendations emerge for the next steps of the strategic planning process for the Community Conservation Program:

- To define and clarify the overall approach to community conservation within the International Program;
- To revisit and clarify the Community Conservation Program mission, goals and objectives in order to create a vision that may include, for example, the interaction of conservation with population dynamics; health and nutrition as a conservation strategy; the role of environmental education; compatible resource use and economic development and the role of women in conservation; and
- To clarify the roles and responsibilities of the administrative structure of community conservation within the International Program and set up mechanisms for collaboration.

These recommendations are to guide the Community Conservation Program strategic planning process. The process must complement the current strategic planning for the Latin America and Caribbean region, take into consideration the Asia and Pacific Program and fit in with The Nature Conservancy’s overall framework for community conservation

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